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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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~ Is Your PC Phishing? ~ Google Desktop Search! ~ Halo 2 Leaked!
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, the fall season apparently is in full swing. The weather has been more typical of the season at hand. Even the hurricanes, albeit drastically minimized in force, have continued to plague the east coast. The leaves around my neck of the woods are just starting to change colors, and also end up in my yard. We even had one night in which we were close to getting some frost on the pumpkins! I'm definitely looking forward to a period of Indian Summer!

There hasn't really been much going on in "our" world to bring me to the verge of editorial comment. That, or maybe I'm just getting older, or less prone to debate some of the issues as I once did. Where are the Tramiels when you need them for editorial fodder?! <grin> Oh well, we'd better get on with this week's issue before I start to reminisce about the "gold old days" that we all remember too well.

Until next time...

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ACE MIDI V1.10 Released!

ACE MIDI V1.10 Released!

Poly/Mono modes, portamento, improved support for accelerators - to name a few of the new features of ACE MIDI. ACE MIDI V1.10 is only available for registered users.

Get a demo version of ACE MIDI from the productions page:
http://newbeat.atari.org/main.php?page=productions

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Best regards,
Paul CAILLET
http://music-atari.org

New STOS Coders List

Anyone wanting to help with the MEGA DEMO project with have access to swap files with other members.

The list is public so all who would like to join are welcome, You can ask the experts all you want and help others out also, swap source code etc.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mega_stos

FreeMiNT v1.16.1 Beta Released

Anders Eriksson has announced:

I'm proud to announce the FreeMiNT 1.16.1 eta release. I'm thankful to all people that worked or helped on the development and all people that still use FreeMiNT.

This beta release is a bug fix release compared to the 1.16.0 beta release.

It includes lot of bug fixes in the kernel and XaAES as result of the bug reports and feedback of the 1.16.0 beta release.

The official download URL is:

http://sparemint.atariforge.net/sparemint/mint/kernel/1.16.1/

As you may already know, XaAES is now part of FreeMiNT. This FreeMiNT beta release include the XaAES beta version 0.992. There are significant enhancements in stability, compatibility and speed due to the great work of Odd Skancke.

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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Vintage Computer Festival 7.0 - Nov. 6-7

Vintage Computer Festival 7.0
Saturday, November 6 through Sunday, November 7
Computer History Museum
Mountain View, California

Since the last VCF, the trials and tribulations of daily life made their inevitability painfully attendant: bills came due, accidents

happened, bad days at the office were had, arguments broke out, and the morning paper was thrown into the sprinklers yet again. Woe is us! But lo, a bright and shining beacon of nerdilicious salvation is on the horizon and draws nigh. The Vintage Computer Festival returns!

Vintage Computer Festival 7.0 is right around the corner, taking place on November 6-7 at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View in (still) sunny California. Flights are cheap and so is the admission, so you have little excuse to stay home cramped behind your computer trying in vain to craft that perfect Google search term. Just put all that nonsense behind you and join us for some fanatical Festival folly!

We are honored to once again have the Computer History Museum as our sponsor!

And as always, we bring you yet another wonderful line-up of speakers, exhibitors, and special events, including a 30th anniversary retrospective of Maze War, the original "first-person shooter" videogame, plus so much more!

In fact, we're planning so much for this year's event, it might possibly be even too much! Some of it we can't even mention yet because we're still in the middle of planning it. So come on out and watch us put on a gargantuan geek gala guaranteed to gasify your gall bladder...either that or watch us crash and burn in spectacular style. Either way, it's sure to be entertaining!

Exhibitors Wanted!!!

One of the best ways to enjoy the VCF is by participating directly. Be an exhibitor! As an exhibitor, you get to be a part of all the behind-the-scenes action. Plus you get a chance to show off your favorite computer and perhaps even win an award for an outstanding exhibit. The Best of Show award includes as a prize the Replica 1, a software compatible re-creation of the legendary Apple-1 computer, courtesy of its creator, Vince Briel. So don't delay, sign up today!

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/exhibit.php

More information about Vince Briel's Replica 1 can be found on his website:

http://home.comcast.net/~vbriel/

We've Got Lodging!

For out of town guests, the VCF has arranged a hotel room block at the Residence Inn Palto Alto Mountain View, located within 3 miles of the Computer History Museum and featuring, among other fine amenities, an on-demand shuttle service between the Inn and the Computer History Museum. The special VCF rate is US$79 per night. Reservations must be made by October 15 to take advantage of this terrific rate so do not delay! Full details are available here:

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/lodging.php

Computer History Galore!

The VCF speaker schedule has moved back to a "track" style this year. The talks are assembled into themes for the most part. We've got another terrific line-up! Check it out:

Saturday, November 6

Track 01

Time	Topic	Speaker
10:00am	Using Vintage Computers in Forensics	Fred Cohen
11:00am	Documenting the BBS	Jason Scott
12:00pm	The Art of Textmode	Christian Wirth
1:00pm	History of FidoNet	Tom Jennings

Track 10

Time	Topic	Speaker
11:30am	Confessions of an Entrepreneur	Dr. Robert Suding
12:30pm	VCF Ramblings	Sellam Ismail
1:00pm	Computer History Museum Update	CHM Staff

Sunday, November 7

Track 01

Time	Topic	Speaker
10:00am	Early IBM History	John Sailors
11:00am	The IBM 360 Evolution and Revolution	Jerome Svigals
12:00pm	Early Microprocessor Design	Nick Tredennick
1:00pm	Maze War Retrospective	Panel

Track 10

Time	Topic	Speaker
10:30am	Things You May Not Know...	Evan Koblentz
11:30am	Tipping Sacred Cows	Tom Jennings
12:30am	The Art of Vintage Computers	Christine Finn
1:30pm	Neo-Retro: The XGameStation	Andre LaMothe

More information on the VCF 7.0 speakers can be found here:

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/speaker.php

BBS Documentary Screening

Jason Scott, proprietor of textfiles.com - the Internet's largest collection of historic textfiles - has completed work on his BBS documentary. "BBS: The Documentary" spans across seven separate films which cover every aspect of the world of bulletin board systems, tracing the history of the BBS as well as the historic figures that made it a distinctly unique mode of digital communication. This will be the first public screening of the documentary, and audience input from VCF attendees will determine the final cut of the film series.

More information on the screening can be found here:

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/screening.php

Computer History Museum Tours

As always, the Computer History Museum's terrific staff will be giving VCF attendees tours of the Museum's fantastic collection. Tours are held in the afternoon and run every half an hour. Tour information is available here:

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/tours.php

Buy, Sell and Trade at the VCF Marketplace

As always, one of the most exciting aspects of the VCF is the Marketplace, where you can find a large and varied assortment of some of the most fantastical old computer thingies anywhere. Find that odd part you've been seeking out for your collection, then touch, smell, even taste it if you like, before haggling out a deal. There is simply no better place to buy and sell vintage computers than at the VCF Marketplace. Vendor booths are still available. For more information on selling at VCF 7.0, please visit:

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/vendor.php

The VCF 7.0 BBS is Live!

Communicate with fellow VCF 7.0 attendees on the VCF 7.0 BBS! Set up trades and carpools, talk about exhibiting, and discuss generally anything about the upcoming Festival:

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/bbs.php

So Much More!

Complete information about VCF 7.0, including the speaker schedule and exhibit roster, as well as lodging information and driving directions, can be found on the VCF 7.0 web pages:

http://www.vintage.org/2004/main/

Keep in mind that the VCF will from now on be held during the first weekend in November.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I've decided to take it easy on the voting stuff this week. There are only a few weeks left until the election now, and in most states, if you haven't registered by now, it's too late. So if you haven't registered, I guess you'll have to just sit back and watch everyone decide what's going to happen for the next four years.

On to another subject. It's been years since Atari manufactured its last computer and, even with the... what would you call them... not after-market.. maybe "other-market"?... computers out there, the glory days of the ST series of computers are behind us. Don't get me wrong, I'm not knocking anyone who puts out a modern TOS machine. I think they should be commended for their hard work, dedication, and ingenuity.

But even more than those who build these cool new machines, those of us who keep on plugging along with their old 1040 or Mega or STacy. I've been using my Atari computers less and less as time has gone on, but I do still fire them up from time to time... usually when I need something to relax me.

I doubt that I'll ever find another type of computer with the personality that my old reliable 1040 had and, to tell the truth, I don't know if I'd want to.

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

"Amigaboy" asks:

"I have a couple of questions about Atari ST software:
1.Floppy disks can be read on a classic PC ,right?
2. where can I download software from the web?
3. Can I simply format DD disks on a PC , copy a game on the floppy and play it on a ATARI ST?"

Ronald Hall replies:

"1. Yes, unless some exotic format is used, a standard "PC" using Windows or Linux should read them fine.
2. Google search for something like "download free Atari ST game" or something. You can also get games that are already made up for some of the
Atari emulators like STeem and Hatari. A huge list is at:

http://steem.atari.st/automation.htm

I'm not sure how to convert those back to standard ST disks. Can someone else here tell how? Thanks.

3. Normally, from TOS 1.4 up, my understanding is that the best way is to format the DD disk on the Atari. The PC should have no trouble reading it then. Not sure about TOS versions below 1.4..."

Jim DeClercq adds:

"The advice given is a bit incomplete. Only Windows 95 can read any Atari disk you might stick in the drive slot. DOS can be set up to read any disk you can stick in that slot. Other than that, format the disk on the Windows machine, and the Atari will read it.

This has been found to work on any version of Windows higher than Windows 95, and even with Dell machines, which seem to want something different than any other machine running Windows.

What you will find is not only what you wanted, but a whole batch of files to support a FAT32 file system. They cause no problems unless you try to erase a disk.

If that is a problem, copy the files you want to a ram disk, or a hard drive, if you have one connected, format the floppy, and copy the files back.

Linux, on the other hand, does follow the Microsoft Boot Sector Standard, which Microsoft does not follow, and should read Atari disks."

Andy Ball takes the thread and runs with another question in the same area:

"How does MS Windows 95 treat 3.5" diskettes differently from DOS? Is it that MS Windows is more ready to work with disks that use an unusual number of sectors per track, cylinders per disk etc?

What does FAT32 have to do with floppy disks? Surely they are usually FAT12?"

Jim tells Andy:

"Windows 95 was Microsoft’s last floppy disk distribution of what they call an operating system. It would save one disk per copy if they formatted the disks to 1.62 megs, and to do that, they had to write an operating system that would actually look at the boot sector to find out how many tracks and sectors it had. Windows did not do that before or since, but Atari and other machines always have.

DOS could, and maybe still can, set up a drive letter with separate information as to tracks and sectors. So, to read a disk with that many tracks and sectors, you change directory to that drive letter, and ls or dir will let you read the disk. For further information, read up on CPM. DOS is CPM with relocating loader, updated as necessary, and absolutely unchanged for a long time.

Floppy disks are not inherently anything. Formatting them gives them a File Address Table. One thing you might learn is that if you put a FAT12 formatted disk into a Windows machine, it will write a FAT32 file system to it, with subdirectory-like files to store 32 character file names. Those subdirectories cause troubles if you are trying to copy disks on an Atari, because TOS does not know about such things.

If you use MiNT, you can make your floppy drive a FAT32 drive, and read Windows disks without problems."

Stephen Moss adds his thoughts:

"As others have mentioned here I can be read on a classic PC, in my experience PC's running DOS, Win 3.x, Win 95, 98 and NT are fine, but my Laptop Running XP wont recognize the Floppy and therefore can't read it.

Has anyone got XP to read 720K floppies? Maybe this is because I am using the BIOS USB driver (as it appears to work) and so have not installed the driver software that came with the USB floppy drive, anyone know if that would make a difference?

Just one thing, when using an Windows OS other than DOS or Win 3.x every time you copy something to the floppy Windows also places empty files with names like Aa, Bb on the floppy but you can not see them. Eventually these will cause the ST to fail to recognize the floppy. Sometimes by using ST Tools to locate and delete these files will allow you access to the floppy once more but this is only a temporary measure and you will eventually need to re-format the floppy.
I recommend using one or two floppies for copying file from a PC to ST and then use the ST to copy them to another floppy before you use the downloaded software.

The university of Michigan archive is a good place to start [looking for downloads], do a web search for "Atari archives"

Yes [you can format in a DOS machine], if it uses the operating systems listed above. When you click the format a box will appear with the format size set to 1.44 as a default, by clicking on this the 720K option should appear just select that and proceed.

Again I am unsure if this is possible using XP as I appear to have no formatting potion selection, its fixed at 1.44, also XP uses a different FAT format from those operating systems listed above (not FAT32), if this new format is also used on floppies I doubt if an ST will be able to access them.

If the program file you download has either a .MSA or .ST file extension it is a disk image file for use with emulators and will need converting back to a real floppy before you can use it - look for a program called MakeDisk which allows you to both create and restore disk images.

If the programs have a .ZIP or .LZH they have been compressed using ZIP and Lharc respectively and will need uncompressing before you can use them - ZIP files can be uncompressed using either PC or ST ZIP programs.

If you have TOS<1.4 you will need to format on the PC if you have TOS 1.4 or higher you can format on either machine but on the PC is probably best."

Ronald Hall just got a CT60 and has some questions:

"Okay, I was lucky, I got in on the tail end of the CT60 list and it just came in the mail a few days ago.

Its one with the 50mhz CPU. However, I picked up a 60mhz 68060 off of Ebay. There is a 2nd oscillator in the CT60 package - 66mhz. So, can I just switch out the CPUs and the oscillators?

Next. When I had a Falcon before, I had a Nemesis accelerator installed and I could run an 800x600 desktop, with 256 colors. Can I get extended colors and resolutions with the CT60, or do I have to do the mods on the bus and DSP?

I would definitely like to be able to switch back to "pure" 68030 mode for software that is incompatible with the 68060. Is this very hard? I can solder a little bit, but I don't want to get knee-deep into something that's over my head and beyond my meager skills."

Carey Christenson tells Ronald:

"The oscillator should not be an issue at all. You might even get lucky and be able to pick up a 72 mhz. osc. and run your 68060 at 72 mhz. like mine.

Remember overclock at your own risk. But, I have had great success at 72 mhz. Is there anyway of telling whether yours is a E41J mask 1 I believe.

I am sure that extended colors would help because this also affects the VIDEL circuit and makes the VIDEL run at 40 or 50 mhz. Rather than the stock 32 mhz.

But I don't believe that it is necessary. I had Rodolphe do my upgrade to my Falcon MOBO and CT60 and he was very timely at getting it turned around. And the speed improvement is noticeable doing the BUS speed from 16 mhz to 25 mhz. The other advantage is DISK accesses were also increased. VIDEO and DSP are increased as well as the DISK and of course the STRam access and Falcon MOBO speed will be higher.

In my experience with the CT60 and my Falcon is if it does not run on a 68060 it must be pretty old software and that I should find a newer program that does something similar. But if you need to go into 030 mode look on Rodolphe's web page and find where it talks about the PINS towards the back of the board behind the SDRam module and find the 2 pins that make it possible to bootup in 030 mode. I believe that single row of pins towards the back of that board the first two on the left are for power the next two are for 030 and 060 modes switching."

"NG" asks about moving data from an Atari to a PC:

"What is the best way to recover ATARI formatted data (not DOS) stored on a SCSI hard disk or an Iomega ZIP tape to a Windows system (or maybe a Linux system) ? The goal of this operation is that my ATARI emulator (STEEM) which runs on a Windows system can use these recovered data."

Coda tells NG:

"I think if you boot linux with the atari file system driver in the kernel (or module?) you can read the disk. Then use 'dd' to make an image of the drive, which you can then mount with Aranym. This is the long way round, I'm sure there is a quicker way."

Henk Robbers posts this little note about TT-Digger:

"There is a new version available on my homepage
(http://members.ams.chello.nl/h.robbers/Home.html)

Bug fixes only:

1 A bug in Pure C object files where a fixup step might be larger
 than 0x1000000.

2 A bug in DRI object files concerning PC.W relative references to
 external names."

Lonny Pursell adds:

"Thanks to Henk for such a handy tool. When it comes to reverse
engineering, it's a must have item."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - More Leisure Suit Larry!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Halo 2 Leaked On Net!
                                    Swedish Girls Got Game!
                                    And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Leisure Suit Larry No Seducer

The recently-released Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude for the
PlayStation 2 is notable for being one of the small but growing number of
console games to feature nudity. The nudity is, however, the least
compelling reason to play the game, unless you have a fetish for visibly
polygonal cartoon breasts and women who appear to be wearing giant
"censored" signs below their waists.

The original Leisure Suit Larry game, a graphical text adventure, was released in 1987 and was one of the first games to put adult humor and images into a game worth playing. Earlier adult games were notable for the controversy they inspired, but Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards actually won an award from the Software Publishers Association.

Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude is essentially a series of mini-games connected by a very loose plot involving a community college and a dating show called Swingles." Larry is one of the small but growing number of console games to feature nudity."

Several sequels later, Larry makes his way to consoles (as well as revisiting the PC). The premise - help Larry get laid - is about the same as the first game, albeit with a brand new Larry. This time, the game's namesake is the nephew of the original and has traded the signature leisure suit for a more contemporary wardrobe that is more contemporary, albeit still ugly.

Rather than a puzzle adventure game, though, Magna Cum Laude is essentially a series of mini-games tied together with some exploration and a very loose plot involving a community college and a dating show called Swingles.

Your job is to seek out women and do whatever it takes to win their affection, whether that's chatting, mixing drinks, jumping on a trampoline or feeding lab monkeys. Each task is accomplished by playing a mini-game.

Mixing drinks, for instance, involves playing a version of Whack-a-Mole, in which the "moles" are the symbols corresponding to buttons on the game controller. Jumping on a trampoline is a very bare-bones rhythm game, and so on. There's a little wandering around to find the right outfit or collect hidden tokens, but you always come back to the mini-games. Over and over.

That's the problem: there only about a dozen different games to play, and each girl requires you to play several. Whack-a-Mole isn't that interesting a game under the best circumstances, and repetition doesn't improve it. It's kind of fun the first time you do it, but by sixth or seventh match you'll dread it, along with the rest of the games.

Only one thing keeps Leisure Suit Larry from being a complete waste of time, and that's the humor. Comedy literally surrounds you, from the conversations of nearby students to the vending machines that let you buy beer and Village People outfits. The humor isn't consistent, to be sure, but so much of it abounds that you can't help but find something to like.

Sophisticates may chuckle at a bookish co-ed going over the pros and cons of Romantic poets as lovers, and lunks will like the bathroom humor. But the game tries so hard to offend that it comes across as desperate - the sheer number of phalluses, dildos and strap-ons is mind-boggling - but it's also capable of surprising subtlety if you're attentive.

The humor keeps the game lively for a few rounds of seduction. Conversations, for instance, are accompanied by a game where you pilot a spermatazoon at the bottom of the screen. Hitting the wrong symbol can trigger lewd and inappropriate comments, so the conversation varies based on your gaming skills.

The first few times you might find yourself thinking you'd like to go back and hear some of the lines you missed, but as the sperm pilot game gets harder, you just want it to end. Whatever amusement value the phrase

"rock-hard glistening megaboner" might have the first time you hear it fades quickly on repetition.

The effect is something like watching a fairly amusing college sex romp movie, only to have it interrupted every 10 minutes as you're hustled out into the hall to play Pong before they'll let you back in. Settings can lower the difficulty level, but it seems pathetic to set a video game to easy mode just so you can get through the levels, hear the jokes and see the breasts. At that point you may as well slip Revenge of the Nerds into the DVD and leave your hands free for eating popcorn.

Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude, by Sierra Entertainment, is available for the PlayStation 2, Microsoft Xbox and for PCs. It is rated "M" for mature and costs $50 for consoles and $30 for the PC version.

Microsoft Slams Halo 2 Leak

Halo 2, Microsoft's most prized Xbox asset and its biggest hope for success this Christmas, has been leaked onto the Internet just days after developer Bungie officially completed work on the game and announced that it had shipped it off to manufacturing, and nearly a month prior to its official US release date, November 9th.

The highly anticipated first-person shooter has appeared on various newsgroups and websites already, and its proliferation amongst the underworld of Xbox gamers downloading illegal software is likely to be swift and damaging.

Earlier today a number of websites using the popular BitTorrent file distribution format indicated that hundreds of users were downloading the game, which reportedly clocks in at just under three gigabytes in size. Early reports suggest that it's a PAL version of the game with French language dialogue and English subtitles.

Reacting to the news this morning, Microsoft slammed those responsible and described downloaders and people hosting the file as thieves, encouraging real fans with any information to come forward and help it track down the source of the leak. The company's statement follows in full:

"Microsoft has learned that a version of Halo 2 has been posted to various newsgroups and web sites. We consider downloading this code or making it available for others to download as theft. We are currently investigating the source of this leak with the appropriate authorities. Pending the result of our investigation, we do not have further comment. Microsoft takes the integrity of its intellectual property extremely seriously, and we are aggressively pursuing the source of this illegal act.

"The launch of Halo 2 worldwide remains unaffected.

"We're asking anyone with information on the source of this leak to contact Microsoft at 1-800-RULEGIT or send email to piracy@microsoft.com."

The good news for Microsoft is that only Xbox owners with modified consoles - a relatively small percentage of the total number of Xbox owners - will be able to play the game at all, and that the key Xbox Live component and the functionality it offers will be unavailable to pirates.

There is also a sense, given the popularity of the Halo franchise and the reverence most Xbox owners offer it, that a lot of the people downloading it this week and in the future will be rather more likely to buy it afterward than they would be with other games.

And even if that weren't true, the publisher would still be able to extract some small consolation from the fact that piracy is unlikely to deny Halo 2 a successful launch. As Doom III proved earlier this year, pre-release piracy isn't enough to stop a highly anticipated game hitting the peak of the charts.

It is nonetheless a source of some embarrassment for Microsoft, particularly with nearly a whole month to go before the game makes it onto high street store shelves, and it'll be interesting to see how the company deals with those responsible when it inevitably unmasks them.

'X-Men Legends' Worthy of Its Royal Pedigree

There aren't many things the band of superheroes known as the X-Men can't do. They can alter weather patterns, heal their own wounds, practice mind control and even star in blockbuster summer movies. But despite their arsenal of superpowers, there's one feat that has long evaded the X-Men: making a good video game.

After the 1980s, when the franchise was represented by an arcade game that sucked in quarters faster than a parking meter in Manhattan, X-Men video games have mainly disappointed. But the losing streak just ended in a big way with X-Men Legends. The game smartly borrows many of the things that made the arcade game great, in addition to adding the sophistication and depth possible with today's consoles.

The game begins, like most things X-Men, with an army of humans attacking a special class of people called mutants. For those not familiar with the X-Men backstory: Think of it as the sci-fi version of the Salem witchcraft trials. Essentially, humans in the X-Men's world realize that due to random freaks of nature, certain people have developed unique powers. Afraid of anyone who's unlike themselves, the humans have decided to hunt down these mutants and imprison them - though some mutants manage not only to forgive the humans but to try to protect them. Those are the X-Men.

It's that conflict that creates the tension in X-Men Legends right at the beginning. The game begins when a young woman is being cornered by a mob of humans who accuse her of being a mutant. She has the uncanny ability to turn into a fireball that basically torches anyone who gets near her.

With a skill like that, it's not hard to see why the evil mutants are eager to recruit her to their side. Your first job as an X-Man is to intervene, get a hold of the newbie mutant and bring her to your side before she gets corrupted.

So the game begins with you as Wolverine, perhaps the most popular of the X-Men. Using Wolverine's incredible physical strength, you smack, slash and rampage past dozens of humans and mutants to recover the hijacked mutant. As in the arcade game, you can pack some pretty nasty hits on your opponents by hitting the right sequences of buttons at the right time.

As you take down more enemies, you gradually build up your characters'

strength and skill. Naturally, the foes also get progressively tougher as you move through the game.

The game really shines in its cooperative, team-based approach. As you play, you can unlock 15 other X-Men in addition to Wolverine. Each X-Man has a unique power that you'll need to defeat certain foes. For instance, when you take on the hulking Blob, even Wolverine's super-strong, unbreakable, adamantium claws don't do much damage. You'll need the power of another X-Man to take him down. (Who? We'll leave that for you to figure out.)

Die-hard fans of the comics can rest assured that the video game is accurate and respectful to the X-Men universe. The characters are faithfully rendered on the screen, the story is true to the years-long backstory and the writing is well done. Adding an element of authenticity for movie fans, Patrick Stewart lends his voice skills to the in-game Professor X, the leader of the X-Men.

In the biggest breakthrough for an X-Men console game, you can team up with up to four of your real friends on the same screen to take on the foes. It's great to see this real-time team approach added to X-Men Legends, since it's exactly what made the arcade X-Men game so fun. Hopefully, future X-Men titles will continue to incorporate this aspect.

There aren't many things to complain about with X-Men Legends. The lack of an online mode is a bit disappointing, since it would have been great fun to gather bands of X-Men by recruiting other live players around the country. Also, the progress of adding skills to the characters (leveling up) is a bit cumbersome and too complicated for gamers who just want to start beating on some enemies.

These are quibbles. Overall, X-Men Legends is a fantastic game that will satisfy both the die-hard X-Men fans and video gamers looking for action. Fans and players alike can hope this is the beginning of the X-Men's successful move - long overdue - into top tier of console gaming.

Conflict: Vietnam Now Available For Playstation 2, Xbox, And PC

Global Star Software, a publishing label of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. announced that Conflict: Vietnam is currently available in retail stores throughout North America for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system, the Xbox videogame system from Microsoft and PC. Transporting the Conflict series from the deserts of the Middle East to the jungles of Vietnam, Conflict: Vietnam builds upon the signature squad based gameplay that has sold over 1.4 million units in North America.

"Moving the Conflict series into a Vietnam setting has provided us with a wealth of new gameplay opportunities that are sure to please both existing fans of the series as well as newcomers," said Christoph Hartmann, Senior Vice President of Publishing for Global Star Software. "Through the use of story, enhanced gameplay, audio and graphics, we've been able to create an experience that?s both a unique and exciting entry into the genre."

Conflict: Vietnam is a squad based action game that puts players in the shoes of four barely trained 101st Airborne soldiers who are caught countless miles behind enemy lines during the 1968 Tet Offensive. It is up to the player to use all four members of the squad and utilize their

different abilities in order to successfully traverse through booby trap filled terrain, loaded with North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers. The objective isn?t to win the war; the objective is to make it out alive.

Features Include:

* The third game in the hugely successful Conflict series.
* Fourteen enormous missions will take players deep into the Vietnamese jungle, through small villages, into ruined temples, and down Viet Cong tunnel complexes.
* Dynamic lighting, vegetation that shifts with wind and movement, an abundance of animals, and lush environments bring the jungle to life.
* Use performance-based points after each mission to develop your characters in 9 skill categories such as Sniper, Medic, and Demolitions.
* A revitalized control scheme allows context sensitive commands such as giving covering fire, guarding civilians, and flanking enemies.
* Splitting paths give players varying options in how to finish missions. Bonus objectives drive players to discover and explore more.
* An era-specific arsenal of over 20 weapons including assault rifles, mortars, and .50 caliber machine guns.
* A wide range of vehicles puts your squad behind the wheel of APCs, jeeps, tanks, helicopters and river boats.
* Paranoia inducing AI with enemies that set booby traps, strike from hidden areas, and coordinate their attacks in an environment that they are the masters of.

Conflict: Vietnam is rated ’M’ for Mature and is currently available for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and the Xbox videogame system from Microsoft, each at a suggested retail price of $39.99. Also available is the PC version, at a suggested retail price of $29.99.

Americans Win Gold at World Cyber Games

Amid fanfare fit for actual world-class athletes, five Americans with really quick fingers took home the gold medal in the popular "Counter Strike" competition of the World Cyber Games championships, capping five days of intense gaming by the world’s elite.

Team3D defeated the Titans of Denmark on Sunday in the counterterrorism-themed PC game, where operatives stake out ramshackle buildings with high-powered sniper rifles and other weapons to take out their foes.

Team3D consists of Salvatore Garozzo, Johnny Quach, Dave Geffon, Ronald Kim and Kyle Miller. The squad also took home $50,000 for their video game prowess. If they plan to pop a bottle of celebratory champagne, only Geffon is old enough to take a legal sip, as his teammates are all under 21.

Many players of online PC games know each other only through nicknames, e-mails and game contests where they never actually meet. This contest allowed gamers to compete in person.

"It really is a great opportunity to meet people from across the world," Geffon said after grabbing the gold.

Organizers said about 30,000 people attended the World Cyber Games championships and outdoor festivities over five days.

The event’s organizers said the final match was watched by an enthusiastic crowd, affirming what others in Europe and Asia have known for years: Top-tier video game playing can become a viable spectator sport when the stakes are high.

Winners at this year’s event, which took over the streets near San Francisco City Hall, took home a combined $400,000, according to organizers. The video game industry rakes in $10 billion annually in the United States alone.

This was the first time in its four-year history that the World Cyber Games has been held outside of South Korea. The event is primarily the brain child of marketing whiz Hank Jeong, backed by the financial muscle of Samsung.

In addition to "Counter Strike: Condition Zero" and "WarCraft III: Frozen Throne," players competed in "FIFA Soccer 2004," "Need For Speed: Underground," "StarCraft: Brood War," Unreal Tournament: 2004," "Halo" and "Project Gotham Racing 2."

All of the games were played on PCs, except "Halo" and "Project Gotham Racing 2," which were played on Microsoft’s Xbox.

All-Girl Swedish Team Tackles Video Games

At first glance, Les Seules might look like an all-girl rock band - complete with sassy attitudes and fawning male groupies - but the Swedish septuplet doesn’t play instruments. They play competitive video games.

"We want to show the rest of the world that guys and girls can play on the same level," team member Louise Thomsen (code name: AurorA) told The Associated Press amid the geeky flurry on the floor of DigitalLife, a four-day technology and entertainment convention.

In French, their name means The Outsiders. But in the world of competitive "Counterstrike," a first-person shooter PC game, Les Seules have moved to the forefront, thanks to their virtual machine gun and grenade wielding techniques and, well, their good looks.

"It’s expected," said Thomsen of their admirers. "It’s a male-dominated field. You get used to blocking it out and concentrating on why you’re there. But any attention we can bring to e-sports, male or female, is a bonus."

Earlier this year, Les Seules played in the female division of the 2004 Electronic Sports World Cup in Paris. They placed fourth and pummeled the Brazil and U.S. teams. Now they’re ready to move beyond playing against girls. They want to make their mark in non-gender classified, male-dominated competitions.

"We want to show the world girls can play," Sofi Bystrom told the AP on Thursday.

Les Seules, whose ages range from 16 to 25, are also known as the Swedish Girls of Gaming, a moniker christened by Sync magazine. They’re featured in a glittery 1980s-style pinup spread in the November issue.

"It was like Halloween," Bystrom said of the experience.

The magazine paid the team’s way to New York to attend the convention at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, which ends Sunday, to promote the issue and compete against average gamers. It’s the first time they have visited the Big Apple.

"It really is big," exclaimed Malin Ohman.

The conglomeration of young women began forming through multiplayer online "Counterstrike" sessions three years ago. Although the majority of Les Seules hail from the land of the midnight sun (two are Dutch), they’re geographically divided.

"We all knew each other online," said Bystrom. "There was a big competition coming up. We were kind of the leftovers. So we just sort of came together."

Hence the name The Outsiders.

The girls take their gaming very seriously. The squad has a professional coach, manager and an Olympian-like training schedule. They practice online for five hours a day, six days a week outside of their regular studies and work. On the eve of competitions, they physically come together to cram during all-night "Counterstrike" killing sessions.

"It’s so different playing with girls because you can talk about everything," said Sofie Sandager (code name: Zelena). "You can have a really good relationship outside the game. Everybody understands you. It’s like having sisters."

The members of Les Seules are: Thomsen, 24, the unofficial leader; Thelma Lundin, 20, the competitive player; Bystrom, 20, the sassy sprite; Sandager, 18, the party girl; Ohman, 16, the serious athlete; Anna Nordlander, 17, the wild child; and Emily Clewett, 25, the quiet one.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

EBay’s PayPal Hit by Glitches in Online Payments

PayPal, eBay Inc.’s online payment service, has had intermittent glitches in its system since late last week and is working to fix the problems with payment processing, log-ins and new account creation, the company said on Monday.

"We are working furiously. ... We have all resources dedicated to getting it fixed as soon as possible," PayPal spokeswoman Amanda Pires told Reuters.

Pires said the problem appeared to be related to a coding update late on Thursday. "We haven’t found the ultimate cause," she added.

It was not immediately clear how widespread the problems were, although eBay’s message boards were filled with postings about the glitches.

Michael Bokan, of West Charlton, New York, told Reuters PayPal usually processes 5 to 10 payments a day on orders from his fly-fishing equipment Web site flyshack.com.

Bokan, who said he can see payment requests being sent to PayPal, said no payments came through on Friday, less than half than normal were processed over the weekend and just one was done on Monday.

High Court Won’t Hear Music Sharing Case

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sidestepped a dispute over whether Internet providers can be forced to identify subscribers illegally swapping music and movies online.

The subject, however, may be back at the court soon.

The Bush administration agrees with recording and movie companies which want to use a 1998 law to get information about Internet users, but the administration also had encouraged the Supreme Court to wait to settle the issue.

The recording industry had sought court intervention now, arguing that more than 2.6 billion music files are illegally downloaded each month and that the law is needed to identify culprits.

The copyright law was written before file-swapping was common, and an appeals court said it could not be used to get information about people who share copyrighted files.

"That is crippling the private copyright enforcement that Congress envisioned as a bulwark against Internet lawlessness, and allowing Internet piracy to metastasize," justices were told in a filing by Washington attorney Donald Verrilli, who represents the Recording Industry Association of America.

"Copyright owners cannot fight back unless they know who the infringers are," he said.

Lawyers for Verizon Communications Inc., which tried to keep private names and addresses of subscribers, disputed that that the industry has been deterred in going after people who trade copyrighted works by computer.

More than 3,000 alleged infringers have been sued since the appeals court’s decision 10 months ago, Verizon lawyer John Thorne said. Those civil suits identify defendants as "John Doe," then seek court permission to get their names.

He warned justices that courts could be swamped with tens of thousands of disputed subpoena enforcement proceedings if it sided with the recording industry.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act compels Internet providers to turn over the names of people suspected of operating pirate Web sites upon subpoena from any federal court clerk’s office.

The appeals court had said it was up to Congress, not courts, to expand the 1998 law to cover popular file-sharing networks.

Movie studios and music labels have been aggressively pursuing copyright infringers. Last week, they filed a Supreme Court appeal that seeks to hold two Internet file-sharing services - Grokster Ltd. and StreamCast Networks Inc. - responsible for their customers’ online swapping of copyrighted songs and movies.

Other cases are pending in lower courts that could give the Supreme Court an opportunity to look at the copyright law, including a dispute involving St. Louis-based cable provider Charter Communications.

The cases are Verizon Internet Services v. Recording Industry Association of America, 03-1722, and Recording Industry Association of America v. Verizon Internet Services, 03-1579.

U.S. Seeks to Stop a Spyware Operation

In what regulators are calling a first, the government has asked for a court order to shut down a spyware operation.

The Federal Trade Commission says computer users who went to certain Web sites unknowingly had the snooping software downloaded onto their computers. The agency says it secretly changed settings, caused computers’ CD-ROM trays to fly open and triggered barrages of pop-up ads for anti-spyware programs called Spy Wiper and Spy Deleter.

The FTC’s acting director of consumer protection, Lydia Parnes, says selling software to fix a problem that you’ve caused is the very definition of "online chutzpah."

The FTC says computer users can protect themselves from the growing problem of spyware by keeping their operating systems and Web browsers updated and by being cautious when downloading software.

Group, Dell Launch Anti-Spyware Campaign

A prominent Internet safety organization and leading computer-maker Dell Inc. launched a campaign Friday to help consumers fend off "spyware," software that can cause sluggish computer performance or popup ads and secretly monitor the activities of Internet users.

The non-profit Internet Education Foundation published on its Web site, www.getnetwise.org, video tutorials and tips for Internet users to keep spyware off computers and detect any spyware already installed. It also directs visitors to dozens of free and commercial tools to easily remove spyware.

The foundation’s members include America Online Inc., Microsoft Corp. and AT&T.

The Federal Trade Commission, which filed its first federal court case last week over spyware, praised the new campaign. FTC Commissioner Jon Leibowitz called spyware a "growing and pernicious problem" and promised that the agency will act against those who distribute it.

Spyware describes a broad category of software that can be installed through unsafe e-mails or Web pages and sometimes is bundled with other software that consumers download and install, such as file-sharing programs popular for downloading music and movies illegally. It frequently slows a computer’s performance, displays annoying popup advertisements and quietly monitors which Web sites a consumer visits.

Dell said it was compelled to join the new campaign by a dramatic rise in support calls from frantic customers upset by sluggish computers or disrupted Web surfing. Dell’s chief marketing officer, Mike George, said spyware is the culprit behind 20 percent of problems affecting Dell customers who call for help - up from 2 percent of calls just 18 months ago.

Dell tells customers it’s not responsible under warranties for fixing problems traced to spyware, but technicians will help remove such software for $39. "You’re responsible for how you use your computer and what Web sites you visit," George said. He said Dell helped sponsor the new campaign because it fears consumer unhappiness over spyware could limit future sales and broader adoption of new technology.

The House this month passed two bills against spyware.

The "Internet Spyware Prevention Act," which passed 415-0, would give the Justice Department $10 million to crack down on companies and others that secretly install spyware and those who attempt to trick victims into disclosing personal details and financial information in e-mail scams popularly known as "phishing."

The "Spy Act," which passed 399-1, would add hefty civil penalties over the use of spyware.

Has Your PC Gone Phishing?

Most phishing attempts come from about 1000 compromised "zombie" computers owned by broadband customers, and the phishing attacks are likely generated by less than five phishing operations, according to a survey by CipherTrust.

The e-mail security company, in a survey this month of more than 4 million pieces of e-mail, found that nearly all of the attacks came from about 1000 machines, mostly customers of DSL or cable modem services.

The number of compromised machines remained fairly static during the two-week survey, suggesting that a limited number of groups were looking for exploited machines to send out phishing-scam e-mail, said Dmitri Alperovitch, a research engineer with CipherTrust.

The survey illustrates the importance of home computer users taking steps

to protect their computers, Alperovitch said. "All of the machines have been exploited in some way or another," he added. "Improving security at DSL or cable customers' homes can certainly solve the problem."

Close to 28 percent of the IP addresses used in the phishing attacks during the two-week survey were from U.S. computers. Another 17 percent of the IP addresses were South Korean, and another 8 percent were Chinese.

About 0.35 percent of the more than 4 million e-mail messages CipherTrust examined were phishing solicitations. Scammers using phishing tactics typically send out e-mail targeting users of financial institutions or other e-commerce sites. The bogus e-mail message often tells recipients there's a problem with their accounts, and that they need to re-enter their bank account or credit card number at a Web site designed to look like the legitimate e-commerce site.

Most of the compromised computers sending phishing e-mail also sent other spam, and much of the e-mail coming from those compromised machines was similar across nearly all of the computers. That leads CipherTrust to believe that all of the phishing attacks during the two-week survey came from two or three phishing operations, Alperovitch said. During a typical day during the survey, about 200 distinct phishing attacks were sent out, compared to hundreds of thousands of spam attacks.

"That tells me there is a very limited number of people involved in this," he added. "There has to be one person crafting this, unless they're sharing a brain or something."

CipherTrust has shared the results of its phishing survey with law enforcement officials, the company said.

During the survey, more than 54 percent of the phishing attempts used e-mail faked to look like it came from CitiBank. Another 13 percent of the attacks targeted customers of Smith Barney, also a division of Citigroup Global Markets, while 10 percent targeted SunTrust Banks, and nearly 8 percent targeted PayPal, owned by eBay. Targets of phishing attacks change over time, CipherTrust noted.

Mac OS X Tiger Available March 31, 2005?

Online retailer Amazon.com has published a page on their Web site taking orders for Apple's Mac OS X Tiger, the company's recently introduced next generation operating system. Apple confirmed for MacCentral on Friday that Mac OS X Tiger is slated to be available in the first half of 2005, but declined to comment further on Amazon's site.

System requirements for the operating system were not available from Amazon, but the price was listed at US$129; no upgrade pricing was listed.

Introduced on June 28, 2004 at Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference in San Francisco, Mac OS X Tiger touts more than 150 new features.

Among the new features expected to draw the interest of consumers include a new search technology called Spotlight that enables users to search for any file, document or information their Mac contains. The software has been modeled to work like the search capabilities of Apple's popular iTunes music software application, and can find e-mails, presentations, images,

appointments, Microsoft Office documents and more, arranging its search results by kind, time or people. What's more, Spotlight enables users to create "Smart Folders," "Smart Playlists," "Smart Mailboxes" and "Smart Groups" that work in the Finder and individual applications to automatically keep content organized and updated.

Safari, Apple's popular standards-based Web browse for Mac OS X, will feature integrated support for RDF Site Summary, or RSS - an increasingly popular method of finding updated content on Web sites. Safari can operate as a full-featured RSS reader, and Mac users will be able to create their own news clippings service using the feature.

Also new to Tiger is Dashboard, an interface for "Widgets," or specialized applications. The technology is based on Mac OS X v10.3's ExposØ feature, and provides ways for users to more conveniently access information like stock quotes, calendar information, calculators, Webcam interfaces and more.

Google Unveils Desktop Search, Takes on Microsoft

Google Inc. on Thursday rolled out a preliminary version of its new desktop search tool, making the first move against its major competitors in the race to provide tools for finding information buried in computer hard drives.

The Google Desktop offering takes direct aim at Microsoft Corp., which bought a desktop search business in July, as well as current and expected desktop product releases from other companies such as Apple Computer Inc., Ask Jeeves Inc. and Time Warner Inc.'s AOL.

Microsoft, the world's biggest software maker, Yahoo Inc. and Google are all going head-to-head in the Web search market to tap into the advertising revenue generated by ads displayed alongside search results.

Google Desktop allows users to search e-mail in Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express, chat threads in AOL Instant Messenger, as well as Web pages viewed in Microsoft's Internet Explorer. It also helps users search plain text, Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint files, among other things.

Google, which in mid-August raised $1.67 billion in an IPO and next week is slated to report financial results for the first time as a public company, said the software is available for free download at http://desktop.google.com.

"Our goal is to have it behave like a photographic memory for your computer," said Marissa Mayer, Google's director of consumer Web products, who added that Google users have been requesting a desktop search capability for years.

Jupiter Research analyst Eric Peterson said the challenge for desktop search providers would be getting people to use the tools after they are downloaded.

Google appears to address that concern by integrating desktop and Web search. As a result, people who have downloaded Google Desktop on their machines will be able to search both the Web and their own PC when they go to www.google.com.

Microsoft in July bought Lookout Inc., which makes software that allows Outlook users to quickly find information contained in e-mail inboxes and file folders. Microsoft also is expected to be adding search technology to Longhorn, the next version of its operating system slated for release in 2006.

Microsoft has demonstrated its own software being developed to search through desktop information, and said that it would offer local search "within the next year."

"This is a big challenge, and we're focused on delivering services that will help people quickly and easily tap that data," a Microsoft spokeswoman said.

Google's entry into the desktop search market will likely raise the profile of the technology while putting the squeeze on smaller competitors, analysts said.

"Once Google enters the market, because of their huge mindshare, people are going to notice," said Sue Feldman, a research vice president at IDC, who also predicted that Google would elbow some players out.

Current desktop search providers include dtSearch, Enfish, ISYS, X1, ZyLAB, Terra Lycos, Blinkx and Copernic.

Web search company Ask Jeeves, which bought private desktop search company Tukaroo Inc. in June, said it will release its own offering before year-end. Ask Jeeves partners with Google for search advertising.

Elsewhere, Google search and advertising partner AOL is reportedly preparing to roll out desktop search in its upcoming AOL Browser beta.

Apple is expected to add desktop search to its next operating system release, code named Tiger, in the first half of 2005.

Worries Persist Over U.S. Electronic Voting

Florida officials will not worry about hanging chads when voters make their choice in November's presidential election but they'll be on the lookout for software glitches, hackers and other less visible plagues.

Across the United States, election officials have embraced sleek touch-screen systems as a way to avoid a replay of the 2000 election, when problematic paper ballots in Florida led to a protracted recount battle that ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Skeptics say that officials may have simply traded hanging chads - the incompletely punched holes in paper ballots - for a new set of problems familiar to any home computer user.

"A lot of people, I think, saw it as a solution to the problems we had in 2000 but have now found that it has its own set of problems," said Sean Greene, research director for Electionline.org, a nonpartisan research group.

Electronic voting will undergo its biggest test yet on Nov. 2, when one in

three U.S. voters is expected to cast their ballots on systems like Diebold Inc.’s AccuVote-TSx.

Touch-screen systems prevent balloting errors and can be used by disabled voters, a requirement of the 2002 Help America Vote Act, say election officials and other boosters.

But computer scientists have highlighted security holes in a series of well-publicized reports over the past two years, and blank screens, misconfigured ballots and other technical glitches have marred elections across the country.

Without a paper trail to verify ballots, officials cannot determine why, for example, 134 voters in Florida’s Broward County showed up to the polls but left their ballots blank in a January election, critics say.

The controversy has prompted some states to postpone upgrades until after the election, even though the federal government has earmarked $3.9 billion for that purpose.

In California, four counties have shelved their AccuVote-TSx machines after an investigation found that Diebold had installed software that had not been approved by the state. California authorities have said they plan to sue Diebold for making false claims.

Ohio authorities had hoped to install touch-screen systems in every county by November, but postponed their plans after an independent review found 57 security flaws in the four systems that had won state approval.

"We moved forward to deploy new systems and do away with punch cards, and then a variety of security concerns arose," said Carlo LoParo, a spokesman for Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell.

Iowa, Montana, North Carolina and Wyoming were also waiting to purchase touch-screen systems until the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission releases national standards next year, Greene said.

In some states, touch-screen systems will print out ballots when they are cast so voters can verify that their choices have been recorded properly.

Voters in Nevada will see this system in operation on Nov. 2. California and Ohio plan to have printers installed on their touch-screen machines by 2006.

But activists have been unable to get courts in Maryland and Florida to require such printers by November, and efforts to require them nationwide have died in Congress.

Activists in Maryland plan to monitor 200 polling places to make sure that improperly programed screens, blank ballots and other problems don’t go unreported.

In Florida, challengers say it’s too late to sideline the machines or install printers on them. Instead, they hope courts will require election officials to take other steps, such as independent polling monitors, to ensure accuracy.

"Basically, we’re talking about some things to make a bad system slightly better," said Eric Johnson, chief of staff to Democratic Rep. Robert Wexler, who filed the suit.

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